

Working with Multiple Generations

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The Washington Post Company



Young learners



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Background

- Today's workplace is populated with employees who span four generations. For leaders, the imperative to understand and to motivate employees ranging from their 20s to their 70s and beyond has never been greater.
- If generations cannot communicate and work together, organizations will suffer from high turnover rates, low morale, and decreased productivity.
- Each generation has unique motivators. Managers need to embrace these differences and fulfill each generation's desire in order to motivate and retain employees.
- In ten years, organizations will be feeling the effects of about 30 million fewer people in the workforce as the Baby Boomers retire.

Fact or Fiction

- **Older and younger people have different values.**

- Fiction: Overall, people express the same values. Across all age groups, people cited *family, integrity, love* and *self-respect* among their top five values. *Fame, affluence, authority, competition* and *advancement* were least likely to rank in the top five, regardless of age.

- **Younger people are slackers - they aren't working the hours older people are.**

- Fiction. The number of hours worked is not related to age. It is primarily related to level in the organization, with people at the top of the organization working longer hours than people lower in the company hierarchy.

Fact or Fiction

- **Older and younger people want different things in their leaders.**
 - Both fact and fiction. The common ground is strong: leaders who are *credible, trusted* and *farsighted* are valued across generations. Younger employees (especially Gen Xers) are more likely to list a *good coach* in their top expectations of a leader.
- **Older people aren't as interested in learning on the job as younger people are**
 - Fiction. Learning on the job is important to everyone. Not only are there no differences by generation, there are no differences as a function of level in the organization, gender, race, company type or country of origin.

Four Generations at Work

Who are they?

- **Traditionalist – Ages 65 and Up** (Veterans, Matures or Silent Generation)
- (Prior to 1945) - 55 million
- **Baby Boomers – Ages 46 to 64**
- (1946-1964) - 77 million
- **Generation X -- Ages 29 to 45** (X'ers)
- (1965-1981) - 46 million
- **Millennials – Ages 28 and Under** (Generation Y, Nexters, Echo Boomers)
(1982-2000) - 60 million

Generation Comparison

| Generation | Birth Years | Population Size | Career Goals | Rewards |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--|
| Traditionalist | Prior to 1945 | 55 million | "Build a Legacy" | <i>"The satisfaction of a job well done."</i> |
| Baby Boomers | 1946 - 1964 | 77 million | "Build a Stellar Career" | <i>"Money, title, recognition, the corner office."</i> |
| Generation X | 1965 - 1981 | 46 million | "Build a Portable Career" | <i>"Freedom is the ultimate reward."</i> |
| Millennials | 1982 - 2000 | 60 million | "Build a Parallel Career" | <i>"Work has to have meaning."</i> |

Traditionalists

Shared Experiences:

- Influenced by or experienced two Wars (WW II & Korean War). Taught them to consider Communism as the enemy and to ration food.
- Children of the Great Depression – taught them to be fiscally prudent, save money, and appreciate a steady paycheck (find a job, keep the job).
- Heroes -- FDR, Lindbergh, Benny Goodman, Ricky Nelson on the Radio
- Value loyalty and hard work in the organization over their individual needs.
- Distinct perspectives about respect for authority
- Desire flexible work benefits. Want to stay productive and be active.
- Wants an employer who values/appreciates their experience. They like to mentor and teach others

Baby Boomers

Shared Experiences:

- Raised during a period of prosperity, change and expansion. Optimistic and focused on personal gratification and growth. Sandwich Generation (Aging Parents in Nursing Homes and Children in College)
- Joined the Mickey Mouse Club and watched “Leave it to Beaver.”
- Used typewriters for term papers, went to Woodstock and fought in Vietnam War. Heroes -- MLK, JFK, Bobby Kennedy & The Beatles.
- Marched against the war in the 60’s, became suits in the 80’s.
- Grew up in crowded homes with many siblings. Due to big families and large classes, they learned to compete for attention, rewards and recognition.
- Characterized as being ambitious (most educated), greedy, and materialistic. Want salary, title, career advancement and status (corner office). They expect to earn respect by demonstrating their capabilities.
- Taught to work hard and “pay your dues.” Feel that they have paid their dues.

Generation X

Shared Experiences

- Both parents worked (latchkey kids). Learned to be very independent and tended to fend for themselves. Have the highest percentage of divorced parents. Parents were often laid off. Taught to keep options open.
- Living experience with multi-cultural and racial society.
- Alligator shirts, Atari, Donkey Kong, Happy Days, Brady Bunch, Star Wars, E.T., Grease, 90210, word processors, records, eight track, cassettes, CD's, DVD's, iPods. Experienced the birth of the internet, cell phones, PDA's and laptops.
- Desire family happiness and work/life balance. Want growth and development opportunities (lifetime employability). Don't need titles or status, but do want expansion of job knowledge/skills.
- Managers of X'ers need to earn their respect. Won't give it simply because you are their boss.

Millennials

Shared Experiences

- Optimistic, civic minded and smarter than any living generation. First Generation to be born into homes with computers. Played Nintendo, always had cable and have pierced noses/tongues/belly buttons.
- Had timeouts (no spankings). Parents were very protective (did not play freely outside w/o supervision). Tend to be the center of the universe basking in adult attention and praise. Are happy, confident, and secure.
- Since they grew up playing video games, learned about instant feedback, problem solving, strategizing, and playing with others.
- Want constant feedback (not just yearly) & want hi-tech at work.
- Desire a casual workplace (use first names). Will not sacrifice their “life” for their company. Don’t want to play by traditional rules of having to pay their dues or promotion systems based on seniority.
- Used to receiving rewards and recognition for everything they do. Not accustomed to customers/co-workers being rude, challenging or confrontational.

Millennials Entitlement Mindset

- Entitled to:
 - Leading Edge Technology
 - A Conflict Free Workplace
 - Constant Feedback
 - A High Salary

Older Workers, Younger Bosses

Younger Boss

- Tip # 1 – Your Boss Doesn't Want a Parent
- Tip # 2 – Your Boss Wants You to Listen
- Tip # 3 – Expect a Laid-Back Management Style
- Tip # 4 – Do Not Call Your Boss After Hours
- Tip # 5 – Demonstrate Your Reliability
- Tip # 6 – Don't Overuse "Their" Pet Phrases

Older Direct Reports

- Tip # 1 – Make the Right First Impression
- Tip # 2 – Don't Make the 50-year-old Think Like You
- Tip # 3 – Listen to the Guidance of Mature Employees
- Tip # 4 – Do Not Lower Requirements or Expectations
- Tip # 5 – Don't Make Assumptions
- Tip # 6 – Respect Differences in Communication Styles

Leading Multigenerational Workgroups

Recruiting values and practices...

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Traditionalist | Emphasize leadership qualities required for success, stress benefits package and mentoring |
| Baby Boomers | Emphasize teamwork and career development programs |
| Generation X | Emphasize individual control over own work and career advancement |
| Millennials | Emphasize the company's mission statement and values, clarify how promotions and advancement happen |

Source: Adapted from James V. Gambone (2005). A New Tool: Building & Leading Through An Intergenerational Lens. Points of View Inc.

Job Listings

JOB A

- Looking for a seasoned Controller for a \$200 million manufacturing facility.
- Member of the plant executive team.
- Will have significant insight into developing company annual goals.
- Will provide leadership to a group of 200 team members.
- Looking for a mature person who enjoys working in a team environment and continuous improvement.
- Experience with high-dollar inventories.
- Must have an MBA and 15 years post-degree experience
- 10 years manufacturing experience.
- Will monitor engineering change processes
- Audit internal records
- Company offers a full range of competitive benefits and prides itself on being a great employer.

JOB B

- Got game? So do we. We're a 75 year old branding agency with the metabolism of a 4 year old. Come play where design is a competitive weapon. If descriptions of your game include "gifted," "amazing," and "inspired" – this is your lucky day. All you need is 5-7 years of client service experience, the presentation skills to sell ice to Eskimos in winter, and a love of the game of branding. You'll have strategic perspective, an appreciation of what great design can do for a brand, and the ability to lead your clients there. We look forward to hearing from you. If you want to join our team, send your resume and cover letter, including salary requirements, to cooljob@company.com.

Leading Multigenerational Workgroups

Leadership Values and Practices...

- Traditionalists** Want leaders not afraid to lead, can make tough decisions and stand by them, also want compassionate leaders who recognize there are exceptions to the rule
- Baby Boomers** Make sure chain of command is clear and consistent and make sure your leadership model is inclusive
- Generation X** Be a consistent leader; do what you say you will do, ask this generation for their input on leadership decision; they want to be listened to
- Millennials** Provide specific examples of leadership in the company; emphasize the quality and experience of the existing leadership

Leading Multigenerational Workgroups

Coaching and Mentoring...

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Traditionalists | Use as coaches and as mentors in difficult situations |
| Baby Boomers | Involve them early so they can assess their own opportunities for coaching and ask them to think of coaching and mentoring as part of lifelong learning |
| Generation X | Offer optional ways to help themselves and offer a menu of people who are willing to coach them |
| Millennials | Explain that coaching will be tailored to existing skills |

Leading Multigenerational Workgroups

Professional Relationships...

- Traditionalists** Emphasize professionalism- they know they have limited time in the workforce, less time to spend on informal relationships, prefer quality to number of relationships
- Baby Boomers** The politically correct and litigious generation – be careful of the language you use, pay attention to process in meetings and make sure everyone has a chance to participate
- Generation X** Be yourself, not afraid to use humor, remain professionally objective. Set an example by setting limits and clear expectations in meetings and presentations
- Millennials** Be sensitive to political correctness, use the appropriate language in professional conversations

Leading Multigenerational Workgroups

Motivation/Recognition...

- Traditionalists** Have seen it all; make sure incentives are quality driven, appreciates recognition, make sure it's done quietly and with dignity
- Baby Boomers** Motivated by ability to reach goals and win, any recognition that makes them stand out from others is fine
- Generation X** Incentives need to be creative, prompt and immediate
- Millennials** Expect and appreciate recognition, prompt feedback and public recognition for their accomplishments

Leading Multigenerational Workgroups

Career Development...

Traditionalists

Help them think about their legacy; what do they want to leave the organization and younger generation

Baby Boomers

Build career development efforts around the concept of change; be sure to include family considerations in career and development planning

Generation X

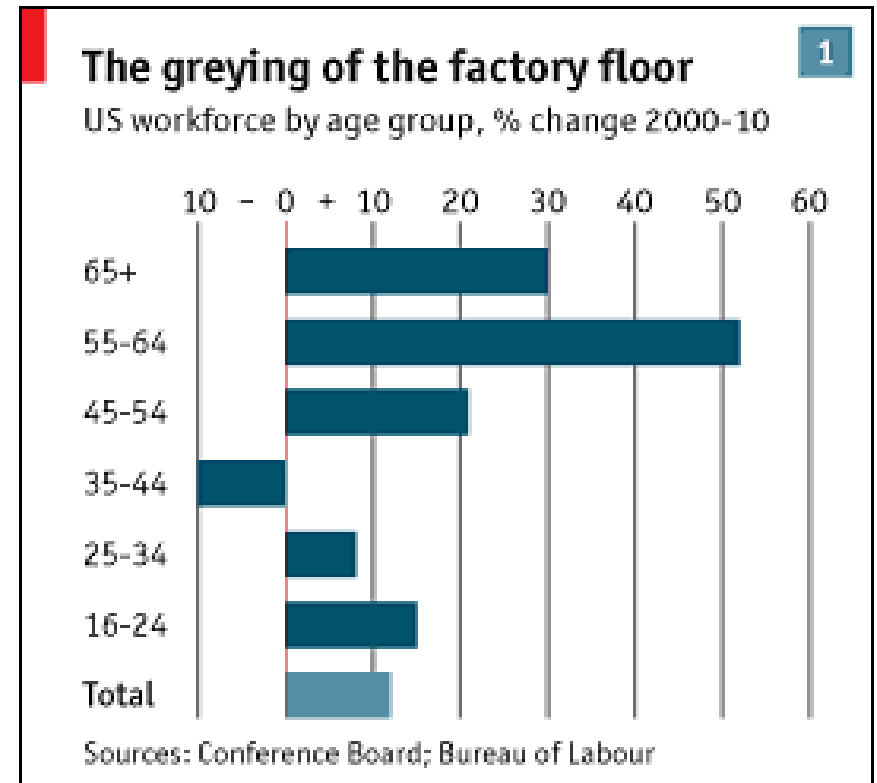
Emphasize how much an organization really needs them for the long haul; offer the best and most “cutting edge” training and career development resources

Millennials

Communicate to them how important they are to the future of the organization; they want to feel like they are receiving the best developmental resources

Global Generational Issues

- U.S. is not the only nation experience generational issues in the workplace.
- Within the EU the number of workers aged between 50 and 64 will increase by 25% over the next two decades, while those aged 20-29 will decrease by 20%.
- In Japan almost 20% of the population is already over 65, the highest share in the world.



Global Perspective

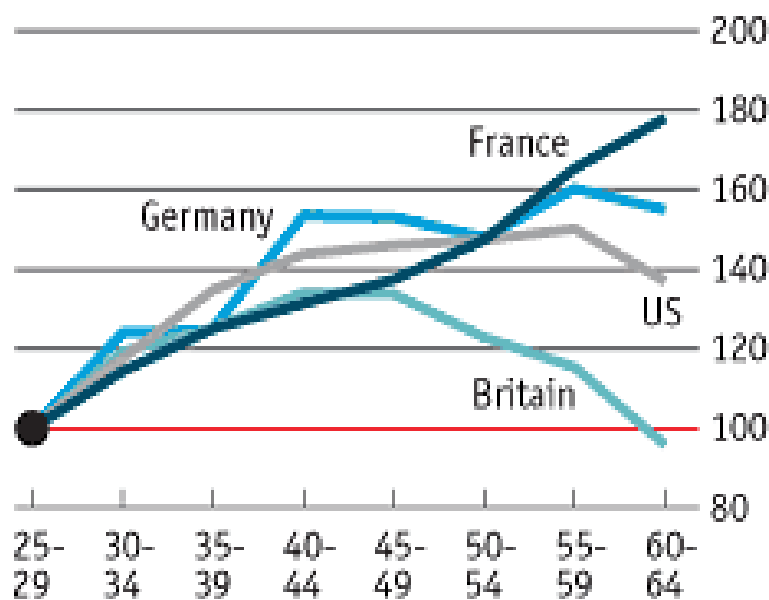
- Since the 1980's, there has been a steady decline in birthrates across Europe & Japan resulting in a Generation Y that is quite smaller than other generations.
- Trend is different in booming economies like China and India where birth rates are on the rise.
 - Approximately 367 million Chinese under the age of 18 in China – more than the entire US population.
- Has led to increased stratification of wealth and bigger differences between the rich and poor.

Age Diversity in Europe

2 The burden of old age

Age-wage profiles

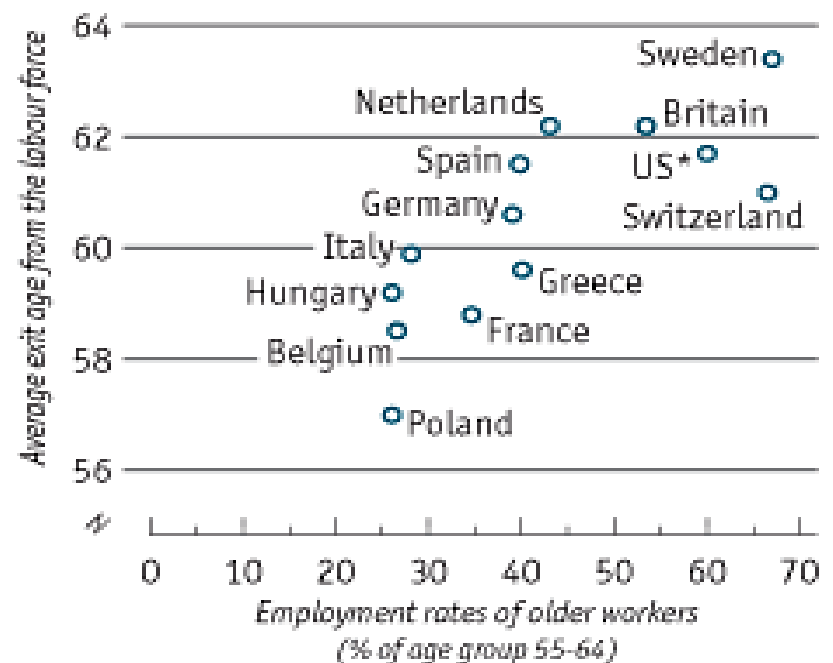
Earnings for 25-29 year olds = 100



Source: OECD

3 Different departure times

Exit ages and employment rates, 2004



Source: Adecco

*2000

Global Case Study - Italy

- Italians have one of the highest life expectancies in the world.
- Also has one of the lowest birth rates in the world.
- In last 10 years, ratio of retired to working Italians has increased 20%. Expected to double by 2040.
- Scant prospects for change at the top – creates despair for young.
- More than 80% of men between 18 – 30 years of age still live with parents.
- Result – losing a lot of young talent to rest of the world.
- Carries serious implications for the workplace.

Building a Work Culture that Values Generational Diversity

Key Considerations:

Individual level

- Greater understanding of individuals
- Acceptance and respect of differences
- Open communications
- Avoidance of stereotyping

Organizational level

- Investment in Training and Development
- Emphasis on succession planning
- Generational diversity is a business issue

Questions

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